



National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service



Interim Report

January 2019

A Report to the American People,
the Congress, and the President





As Chairman of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service, I am pleased to share this Interim Report outlining what the Commission has learned in our first year of work. The Commission presents a significant opportunity, for the first time in our nation's history, to holistically and comprehensively review the Selective Service System along with military, national, and public service. With this report, and over the course of the next year, we endeavor to solicit feedback on our observations and the proposals that have been made to us and ignite a national conversation about service and its role in our democratic society.

Throughout 2018, we traveled across the country listening to the American public. We learned how service makes a difference in the lives of Americans and is embedded in the very fabric of our nation. We heard from passionate advocates, on both sides, when we asked if women should be required to register with the Selective Service System. We also heard how, through service, Americans reach across divides to unite for a common purpose. We saw and were inspired by the tremendous work and spirit of those who serve in our military, perform national service, or serve in local, state, tribal, or federal government. Alexis de Tocqueville observed nearly 200 years ago, "I have seen Americans making great and sincere sacrifices for the key common good, and a hundred times I have noticed that, when needs be, they almost always gave each other faithful support." Like him, we hope to promote that same spirit of everyday Americans who dedicate their time, energy, and talents to our nation.

Our conversations underscored that while service is encouraged by many families, schools, and communities, there is no widely held expectation of service in the United States. As a result, military, national, and public service is the exception rather than the rule. In a country of more than 329 million people, the extraordinary potential for service is largely untapped. This report begins to explore the many ways in which our nation can foster a culture of service, while strengthening our communities, civil society, and sense of citizenship.

My fellow Commissioners and I are grateful to those whose commitment to service has proven instrumental in bringing these issues to the forefront of public debate. We thank Representatives Mac Thornberry and Adam Smith of the House Armed Services Committee along with the late Senator John McCain and Senator Jack Reed of the Senate Armed Services Committee for their vision in creating this Commission. We also deeply appreciate all who have contributed to our nation and our communities through service.

The final recommendations we will make to the Congress, the President, and the American people in March 2020 will address challenging issues fundamental to civic life in America. We already heard from thousands of Americans like you, who shared their thoughts, stories, and expertise, and we want to hear from thousands more. We hope you will talk to your friends and family about our mission. Please share your thoughts with the Commission via our website, www.inspire2serve.gov, sign up to receive updates on our progress, and join us at one of our upcoming public hearings.

Our vision is that by working together, every American will be inspired and eager to serve. Join us in making this vision a reality.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joseph J. Heck".

Joseph J. Heck
Chairman



Commissioners

The Honorable Dr. Joseph Heck, Chairman

The Honorable Mark Gearan, Vice Chair

The Honorable Debra Wada, Vice Chair

Mr. Edward Allard III

Mr. Steve Barney

The Honorable Dr. Janine Davidson

The Honorable Avril Haines

Ms. Jeanette James

Mr. Alan Khazei

Mr. Thomas Kilgannon

Ms. Shawn Skelly

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Source: National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service

About the Commission

The United States is a nation built on service. From our first days as a republic, service to our communities and to our nation was, and remains, a central part of what it means to be an American. The earliest citizens of this country united to ensure that they—and future generations of Americans—could exercise the rights and bear the responsibilities of citizenship. They fought for the right to govern themselves and recognized that such governance requires civic engagement.

Over 200 years later, Americans continue to recognize that civic engagement and service are critical to the health of our republic. As we traveled the country, we heard from citizens who reaffirmed that when Americans organize and work together to make our communities stronger and our nation safer, we thrive. Service builds vibrant civil societies by bringing people together to tackle common problems.¹ Whether in the form of National Guard soldiers rescuing a family from rising floodwaters, Department of Agriculture employees working with local farmers to test soil conditions, or AmeriCorps members building homes for those who have lost them, it is service that makes our country exceptional.

Americans serve in many ways. We also consistently come together to help one another in times of crisis, displaying a strong willingness to unite in the aftermath of tragedy or natural disasters.² While millions of individuals do volunteer and serve, we can do more to build on the compassionate spirit that resides in the hearts of Americans and embed service in the very fabric of our lives and communities.

*We define **service** as a personal commitment of time, energy, and talent to a mission that contributes to the public good by protecting the nation and its citizens, strengthening communities, or promoting the general social welfare.*

In 2016, House and Senate Republicans and Democrats came together to create the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service. Recognizing the value in promoting a greater ethos of service in the United States, the late Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) championed the establishment of this bipartisan Commission. Both leaders saw the need to promote the notion of service above self and develop ideas to inspire more Americans to serve. This is the first time in American history that our

government has undertaken a comprehensive review of all forms of service to country: military, national, and public. The Commission's Interim Report is an opportunity to share what we have learned and take the next steps in fostering a meaningful and robust conversation with the American public on options the Commission is considering and how service can strengthen our nation. As we work to develop recommendations for the Congress, the President, and the American people, our vision is clear—every American, inspired and eager to serve.

"Ours is a nation built on pride in sacrifice and commitment to shared values—on a willingness of our citizens to give of their time and energy for the good of the whole."

- Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor

Our charge

The Congress charged the Commission with two primary tasks.³ The first is to review the selective service registration process operated by the Selective Service System, an independent federal agency—entirely separate from the Department of Defense. Currently, all men ages 18 through 25 are required by law to provide basic personal information to the Selective Service System. The government would use this information to identify individuals for military service if both the President and the Congress authorize a military draft. Our bipartisan Commission was created amid a debate over whether the selective service registration requirement should be extended to include women. This debate began after the Secretary of Defense opened all military combat roles to women in 2015.⁴ The Commission is charged with considering whether the nation still requires a registration system, whether *all* individuals should be required to register for a potential draft, and whether certain changes might enhance the existing system to meet evolving national security needs.

The second task is to examine and recommend ways to increase participation in military, national, and public service as a means to strengthen our nation. The Commission is exploring whether the government should require all Americans to serve in some capacity as part of their civic duty and the duration of that service. Separate from that fundamental question, we are examining what motivates our military members, national service participants, and public servants in order to identify ways to encourage more of our fellow Americans to follow their lead. We are exploring how to incentivize service along with what may discourage or prevent individuals from serving. We are also considering how best to reach out to young Americans who might want to serve but are unaware of service opportunities, older Americans who may have left the workforce but have a continuing desire to give back, and individuals with critical skills whose talents could help meet the changing needs of our nation. The Commission is charged with developing recommendations on these two tasks and submitting these recommendations to the Congress and the President by March 2020.

"The importance of this Commission's work and mission cannot be overstated. We, as a government, must invest in our public servants."

- Senator Jack Reed (D-RI)

The Commission's first year

In order to explore our charge, we developed a comprehensive plan to listen and learn from the American people. From January to December 2018, we traveled across the nation. We visited big cities, small towns, military bases, government offices, high schools and middle schools, community organizations, and more. The Commission traveled to each of the country's nine census divisions to engage Americans who have served, who aspire to serve, and who do not want to serve. We met with elected

officials, academic experts, military leaders and service members, managers and participants in service programs like AmeriCorps and the Peace Corps, and federal, state, local, and tribal government employees. We also talked with business leaders and members of faith-based communities.

We met with and heard from a broad cross section of Americans, including those who support selective service as an insurance policy against unanticipated threats, those who oppose selective service based on their consciences or religious beliefs, and men who refuse to register for selective service on principle. We also spoke with young Americans, including students in middle and high schools, community colleges, vocational and technical schools, and four-year universities. We held public meetings, engaged in small group discussions, conducted interviews, and extensively researched previous work on these topics. We also heard from thousands of Americans who shared ideas and experiences directly with the Commission. All of this valuable input is critical to our ability to develop recommendations on the Selective Service System and ways to increase participation in military, national, and public service.

Locations Visited in 2018

- Austin, Texas
- Bismarck, North Dakota
- Boston, Massachusetts
- Carlisle, Pennsylvania
- Cedar Rapids, Iowa
- Chapel Hill, North Carolina
- Chicago, Illinois
- Clifton, Texas
- Colorado Springs, Colorado
- Columbus, Ohio
- Cranfills Gap, Texas
- Denver, Colorado
- Fort Knox, Kentucky
- Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
- Iowa City, Iowa
- Jacksonville, Florida
- Killeen, Texas
- Los Angeles, California
- Memphis, Tennessee
- Nashua, New Hampshire
- San Diego, California
- Seattle, Washington
- Vinton, Iowa
- Waco, Texas



What We Have Learned

Universal service: an ongoing conversation

Throughout our travels, we learned that Americans value service and are willing to consider a variety of options to encourage or require service of all citizens. We heard from people who believe strongly that the United States should pursue a transformative effort to involve many more Americans in military, national, and public service. Some suggested committing enough resources so that any American with a desire can participate in some form of service—an approach we call *universal access*. Others argued service should become a *universal expectation*, meaning that while service would remain voluntary, the norm would be for every American to devote at least a full year to either military, national, or public service. Others told us service to the nation should be a *universal obligation* and have recommended to us that all Americans be required to serve, with a choice in how to satisfy the requirement.⁵

We met some Americans whose views in support of mandatory service were influenced by overseas travel to nations like Israel, where they saw

required military service foster a national cohesion and sense of purpose throughout the country. As a result, we explored military and national service models in countries around the world, especially in nations that have recently reinstated service requirements, such as Sweden and France. Though examples from other countries are informative, we recognize that no other nation's needs or circumstances are the same as our own.

We also heard from some Americans who oppose any proposals to make service mandatory, citing the importance of the spirit of volunteerism and concerns about the government encroaching on personal liberties. Others question the constitutional and implementation challenges of such a service requirement.

"Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

- President John F. Kennedy

Selective service: a mystery to many

While many government officials and some Americans are aware of the details of the Selective Service System and the implications of registration, we learned many others are not. Furthermore, many are not even aware of the registration requirement for young men and do not often think about their responsibilities to defend the nation, if required.



Source: U.S. DoD, photo by Spc. Hannah Tarkelly

The United States ended the practice of conscription—requiring young men to serve in the military involuntarily—and terminated the requirement that young men register for the Selective Service System in 1973. The United States then shifted to a military comprised entirely of those who choose to serve. While the nation's military remains a volunteer force, in 1980 President Carter resumed the Selective Service System registration requirement in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, to ensure the nation could conscript in the future if the need arises.⁶

Today, the United States has a legal requirement for young men ages 18 through 25 to register with the Selective Service System.⁷ However, many Americans seem to be unaware of the purpose of this system and the process by which they register.

While men can register for selective service either by mail or on the Selective Service System website, the majority of young men incidentally register when they receive a driver's license or apply

for federal student aid. For most men, registration is a passive process, with many not even aware of the obligation for which they have registered.⁸

Some Americans told us that registration should be a more active process that reminds individuals of their duty to contribute to the defense of the nation. However, others note that this may reduce the number of men who register and subject those who do not register to lifelong consequences, such as the inability to seek federal financial aid for education or employment with the federal government.

We also heard from many Americans who are surprised that women are currently neither required nor permitted to register for selective service and question the rationale for excluding women from the obligation to defend the nation. Because women can volunteer to serve as fighter pilots, as submariners, and in the infantry, many Americans have questioned why qualified women would not be subject to a draft like qualified men. We have heard from others, however, who believe that physical differences between men and women would make it impractical or even dangerous to conscript women to serve in combat roles.

"I firmly do NOT support the idea of a Selective Service System and believe very strongly in allowing young men and women to decline from registering, without retribution, due to their personal beliefs and following their conscience."

- Public Comment

If the Congress and the President authorize a draft and past practices are continued, men would be called by random lottery and examined for military eligibility, after which they would be deferred, exempted, or inducted into the Armed Forces. If a man objects to military service for religious or ethical reasons, he may be placed into the Alternative Service Program. We have heard from both conscientious objectors who oppose war and feel the act of

registration condones violence, and from draft resisters who refuse to register, believing conscription is a violation of their rights. They have argued that current law does not offer any acceptable options for Americans who choose not to register.

In addition to hearing from Americans who are unaware of the legal requirements for registration, as well as those who feel passionately about the implications of registration, we also met with officials at the Selective Service System and several of the over 10,000 local board members who are trained to determine the deferment status of young men from their local communities in the event of a draft. We also heard from currently serving military service members, academic experts, and an array of government leaders who shared varying opinions expressing support for as well as skepticism of the utility of the Selective Service System. Finally, the Department of Defense reported that it views the Selective Service System as a low-cost insurance policy against unforeseen threats.⁹

Service: barriers to participation exist

Over the past year, we saw firsthand the commitment of Americans who serve in military, national, and public service. We met hundreds of individuals who serve their communities and the nation, from young adults enlisting in the armed services to civil servants working to meet community needs to older Americans mentoring schoolchildren. We also learned that barriers too often prevent inspired and eager Americans from serving.

Repeatedly, we heard from Americans who were not aware of opportunities to serve, are not eligible for the service options they seek, or want to serve but cannot afford to participate. Still others face the challenge that there are simply not enough opportunities for all those who want to serve. These barriers vary across military, national, and public service, but all result in limiting the opportunities for more Americans to serve.

About **2.4 million** people serve in the Active Duty, National Guard, or Reserve component of the military.¹⁰

Military service: a responsibility borne by few

After the shift to an all-volunteer force in 1973, young Americans from certain communities became more likely than others to join the military. For example, 45 years ago, about half of enlisted recruits came from the American South and West; today, that number is nearly 70 percent.¹¹ Family members of current or former service members are exposed to military service and are more likely to show an interest in entering the military.¹² Although veterans are more likely to recommend military service to young Americans than those who are unfamiliar with the military, veterans comprise less than 10 percent of the population.¹³ As a result of these trends, many Americans have limited interactions with the military community and are unaware of the range of available career and service options. Today, about 4 in 10 young Americans say they have never even considered military service.¹⁴



Source: U.S. Air Force, photo by Staff Sgt. Mazer O. Da Cunha

"Many educators don't really see the military as a smart option for kids, and I completely disagree with this. The military instills values and knowledge, while providing opportunity for both the individual and our country. It is a wonderful choice for students, and I wish the educational system would promote it more."

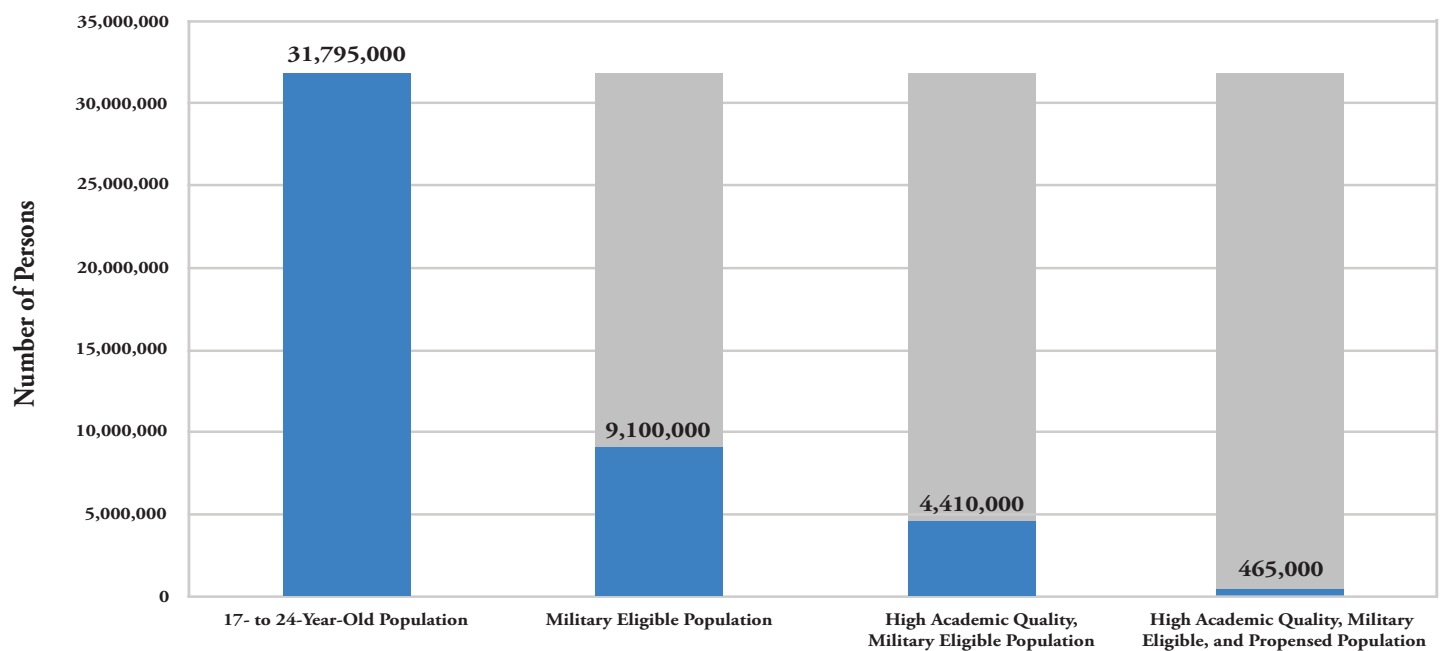
- Public Comment

We heard concerns from both military members and those who have not served in the armed forces that, as the gap between the military and the rest of the American public widens, the awareness of the military and its opportunities decreases. This limits otherwise qualified young Americans from gaining the experiences and benefits of military service. We also heard concerns from many currently-serving military members about the false narratives or perceptions about the military from television, movies, the internet, and video games: depictions that tend to focus on the most dangerous jobs and can at times be inaccurate.¹⁵ We heard from recruiters that many schools prevent students from

learning about opportunities to serve in the military by blocking recruiters from campus.¹⁶ Indeed, we heard from Americans who did not know about the educational opportunities to go to college and serve, such as the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, or whose high school guidance counselors were not able to help them navigate the process of applying to a service academy.

In addition, we met many young Americans who are not eligible to join the military. Under current standards, 71 percent of Americans ages 17 through 24 do not meet the qualifications for military service.¹⁷ Medical issues, weight, body art, a history of drug use, educational attainment, or a criminal record may disqualify a person from military service.¹⁸ Some of these barriers reflect major societal challenges, such as nutritional choice and lack of physical activity. Others result from changing attitudes. For example, more Americans have difficulty meeting the military's eligibility standards because tattoos have become more commonplace and some states have legalized the possession and use of marijuana. Other barriers may be explained by

Number of Youth Interested in and Eligible for Military Service¹⁹



Source: U.S. Army

17- to 24-Year-Old Population and Population Subsets

Source: Corporation for National and Community Service



increased rates of diagnosis and treatment of mental and behavioral health issues. We also learned Americans who are ineligible for military service are rarely informed about opportunities to serve our country in either national or public service.

All these barriers—lack of connection with, awareness of, and eligibility for military service—are depriving Americans who would otherwise want to serve of the opportunity to do so.

National service: America's best-kept secret

Every year, hundreds of thousands of volunteers, not-for-profit organizations, and national service members deliver critical services to Americans, such as disaster relief, humanitarian aid, education, conservation, and protection of natural resources.²⁰ National service includes programs such as Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, YouthBuild, City Year, and Teach for America. Typically, national ser-

vice members include young adults who view service as a pathway to college or a career, college graduates who want to improve their community or live abroad while gaining valuable experiences, and older Americans who have retired from the workforce but want to keep contributing to their communities and the nation.

Unfortunately, far too few Americans even know these opportunities exist. More than 60 percent of young people ages 14 through 24 are not aware of service-year opportunities.²¹ As is the case for the military, many of the volunteers in these programs learned about the opportunity from a friend or family member who served. Some also benefited from the services of a national service program when they were younger.

We met Americans whose lives were changed by their service opportunities. Young Americans told us they benefit from serving alongside individuals with different experiences and from different communities. Retired Americans told us they gain as much as they give when they dedicate time to serve their neighbors. For many, service sparks a lifelong desire to give back.

We also engaged with some Americans who know about and want to volunteer for national service but are unable to participate because they cannot afford to do so. For example, while AmeriCorps



"I was 17, a senior in high school in Aberdeen, South Dakota, and watching the 1995 State of the Union Address with my mom. Graduation was approaching, and I knew I was on my own to pay for college. When I heard the words, 'there are 20,000 Americans ... helping people, solving problems and, in the process, earning some money for their education. This is citizenship at its best,' I was sold. I took a leap of faith and signed up for AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps. We tutored, built trails, painted houses, and supported the 1996 Olympic Games. After a life-changing year as a corps member, I used my AmeriCorps education award to pay my first tuition bill at the University of Colorado and joined the Air Force Reserve Officers' Training Corps.

From Boulder to Bagram, AmeriCorps to Afghanistan, I credit every opportunity I've been given to my national service roots. I'm beyond proud to be both an AmeriCorps alum and an active-duty service member. It's all about service, no matter the uniform."

- Rebecca

Photo used with permission.

About **75,000** people serve in AmeriCorps, **220,000** in Senior Corps, and **7,000** in Peace Corps.²²

provides financial support to its members, the living stipend is typically near the poverty line and cannot reliably cover necessities for some participants.²³ As a result, many interested Americans opt for alternative opportunities in the private sector.

Public service: personnel practices are a barrier

Public service—defined as civilian employment in federal, state, local, and tribal governments as well as elected office—is critical to the health of civil society and national security. For example, public servants respond to emergencies, monitor water quality, ensure the safety of mission-critical systems like air traffic control and nuclear power plants, deliver health care to veterans, administer public programs like Social Security, and provide critical support functions for the military. Nevertheless, we have heard repeatedly that public service recruiting and hiring practices are out of touch with the realities of the modern workforce and insufficient to meet the needs of the many talented and dedicated public servants working across all levels of government.

Many civil servants we met are frustrated with how they are frequently portrayed and perceived as being ineffective, though they provide the nation with valuable services. They repeatedly ex-

pressed to us that these sentiments lower morale and discourage younger Americans from pursuing public service careers.

Civil servants and others also told us that the federal hiring process is too slow, fails to accurately assess job applicants, contains a variety of inflexible hiring preferences, and many times fails to hire anyone for open positions. We heard from current and aspiring civil servants that USAJOBS, which is the federal government's central portal for job postings and applications, does not meet the needs of either applicants or hiring managers. Existing rules and regulations make leaving and returning to federal employment unnecessarily difficult and discourage employees who value flexibility and the ability to move from one organization to another.

About **2 million** people serve in federal civilian jobs, **5 million** in state government, and **14 million** in local and tribal government.²⁴

These problems seem especially severe when it comes to younger Americans. Americans under the age of 35 make up 35 percent of the nation's workforce but only 17 percent of federal civilian employees.²⁵ Ready or not, generational change will come to federal agencies, because 30 percent of civil servants, including a majority of senior agency executives, will be eligible to retire in five years.²⁶ Yet young adults are avoiding or being turned away from federal employment.



"I learned of the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) program in 2014. The program was actively recruiting people with science, technology, engineering, and mathematics backgrounds, and it sounded like a great way for me to leverage my skills and serve my country. I enjoyed the work because I was contributing to the Environmental Protection Agency's mission of protecting human health and the environment. I found my coworkers' commitment and dedication to this mission both inspiring and motivating. One memorable experience I had with the PMF was my rotational assignment, which introduced me to new collaborators, further developed my professional and scientific proficiencies, and showed me that the international community looks to our federal agencies to lead efforts that benefit the public globally. In September 2018, I became a full-time Environmental Protection Agency employee. I look forward to a long career in public service that will allow me to manage and develop projects on the forefront of radiation protection."

- Jay

Similarly, government officials at all levels told us that it is difficult to recruit and retain workers with high-demand skills, such as cybersecurity workers and health care providers, due in part to competitive market pressures.



Source: Corporation for National and Community Service

Civic knowledge: critical to democracy

While meeting with Americans across the country, we were struck by how often we heard people speak about the importance of a strong civic education. We heard this refrain from military members, community volunteers, public servants, teachers, students, fellow Americans living in densely populated areas, and those hailing from small communities.

The more often we heard Americans discuss the topic, the more we came to see it as far more than a simple refrain. Studies show that a robust civic education improves civic health in many ways—by increasing voter participation, reducing school dropout rates, and encouraging constructive community engagement.²⁷ Students who receive effective civic education are four times more likely to volunteer and participate in their communities, as civic education provides young Americans with the tools they need to make a difference.²⁸ As the

people we met with and leading research suggests, civic education has a critical role in creating engaged citizens who are likely to contribute and make a positive impact on our nation.

"I believe we start increasing participation in all areas by reinvigorating the teaching of U.S. history and civics in public schools."

- Public Comment

We are far from the first organization to make these observations. In fact, our nation has a robust network of not-for-profit organizations devoted to helping schools deliver quality civic education to students from elementary through high school. Forty-two states and the District of Columbia have passed laws that require some form of civic education prior to high school graduation.²⁹ We visited Florida, where the Sandra Day O'Connor Civics Education Act of 2010 requires all middle school students to pass one semester of civic education to be promoted to high school.³⁰ In Illinois, we spoke to educators who explained a new state requirement for all high school students to complete a semester-long civics course that includes simulations of democratic processes.³¹

Only 26 percent of Americans can name all three branches of the U.S. government.³²

Yet we also learned that the standards for civic education vary greatly across our country and that, in the past decade, the federal government substantially reduced federal funding and grants focused on supporting civic education.³³ Ultimately, we learned that too few young people receive a solid foundation of civic knowledge.



Source: Top Left: ParkerDeen via Getty Images. Right: Corporation for National and Community Service. Bottom Left: Minnesota National Guard. Right: Corporation for National and Community Service

What We Are Considering

The Commission is charged with considering a range of proposals to strengthen the pathways to service, help the nation defend itself against future adversaries, and break down barriers to military, national, and public service. Below are some examples of alternatives that we intend to discuss at public hearings and in continued conversations with the American people in the coming months.

Universal service

We are considering several possible ways in which universal service, whether mandatory or not, could be implemented for America's young people. Although the United States has never adopted universal national service, we are exploring what a program that requires every American to complete a dedicated period of military, national, or public service might look like. Among other questions, we are asking: What unmet needs of the nation could be addressed through a formal service program? What approaches could the nation take to foster a new norm in which giving at least one year of service to the nation becomes an expected rite of passage?

We are also considering how service could be integrated into high school. For example, should

high schools transform the final semester of senior year into a hands-on service learning experience? Should schools offer service-oriented summer projects or a year of service learning? What benefits could such programs bring to the participants, our communities, and our nation? How would such programs be structured to ensure they are inclusive and available to all?

*Young Americans' interest in service is evident given their appetite to volunteer: Over **28 percent** of millennials report volunteering in 2017, performing roughly **1.5 billion** hours of community service.³⁴*

We are considering these questions and others as we explore the best ways to increase participation in military, national, and public service.

Selective Service System

Although the United States does not have a draft right now, the country maintains the requirement for men to register for selective service in case the Congress and the President reinstate conscription. We are tasked with considering a range of modifications as we explore scenarios a modern registration system should prepare to meet and what today's military might ask of those called to serve.

The Congress charged the Commission with considering whether to expand the registration requirement for the Selective Service System to include women. We are carefully considering and actively seeking input on this crucial question.

"I can't fault the women who choose a life of military service, but to draft all of us to such an obligation: No, absolutely not. This civilization depends on the nurturing loving influence that women bring to the public discourse and to the business of raising healthy citizenry."

- Public Comment

We are also charged with considering proposals to better identify what critical skills the nation might need and with whom those skills reside. For example, we are considering ways in which individuals might share information about their education and skills as they develop over time and whether it can be a part of the selective service registration process. We are studying ways to leverage the existing system to call upon volunteers who might respond readily to emergencies, offering national leaders additional alternatives prior to considering a draft. Finally, we are exploring reasonable changes to identify, evaluate, and protect those who, for reasons of deep personal, ethical, or religious conviction, will not serve in the military but would be prepared to perform alternative service.

"If we have a draft, we need the best qualified individuals in our military regardless of gender. All combat positions have opened to women, and they have proven themselves as outstanding warriors and contributors to our military."

- Public Comment

By examining these and a wide range of other options, we hope to determine what changes could benefit our nation as it evolves to address the emerging threats of the 21st century.

Expanding pathways to service

We are impressed with the impact that service has on communities, the nation, and individuals who serve, but many Americans face barriers to service. Some are not aware of opportunities for military, national, and public service. Others are aware but do not aspire to serve. Many aspire to serve but lack access. We are considering a range of options to encourage and allow more Americans to participate in military, national, and public service.



Source: U.S. Air Force, photo by Alejandro Peña

Military service

We have learned that awareness is key when it comes to military service, with many young Americans being unfamiliar with the realities of military service and the various jobs, opportunities, and educational benefits offered. To address these issues, a number of ideas have been suggested to us, including:

- Formally ask all young Americans to consider military service
- Invest in education for parents, teachers, and counselors on military service opportunities
- Increase the number of high school students who take a version of the military entrance exam that identifies strengths and career interests
- Reinforce laws that ensure recruiters receive equal access to high schools, colleges, and other postsecondary opportunities
- Create new pipelines to military service, such as offering financial support for students studying toward technical certifications in exchange for a military service commitment

What We Are Considering

- Develop new pathways in areas of critical need to access and develop those with the affinity, interest, training, education, and/or certification in exchange for a military service commitment
- Encourage more mid-career civilians to enter the military at a rank appropriate to their experience

National service

We have learned that national service suffers from a lack of broad awareness about potential opportunities and significant barriers to access for many young Americans who might otherwise have a desire to serve. To address these issues, a number of ideas have been suggested to us, including:

- Formally ask all young Americans to consider national service
- Create a national marketing campaign to advertise opportunities about national service
- Promote service learning to tie kindergarten through higher education curricula to community service
- Encourage or incentivize colleges and employers to recruit individuals who have completed a service year and to award college credit for national service experience
- Offer a fellowship to 18-year-olds who want to serve, covering their living stipend and post-service award for a year of national service at any approved not-for-profit organization
- Integrate a semester of service into the high school curriculum
- Fund additional national service opportunities
- Increase the living stipend for those who participate in national service programs
- Exempt the existing education award from income tax or allow it to be used for other purposes
- Explore possibilities within the Peace Corps to meet host country needs with volunteers who have not completed a college degree
- Provide an expanded educational award for each year of national service completed



Source: Peace Corps

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'"

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



"After walking past the Mile High Youth Corps hiring sign several times, one day I decided to walk in and speak to the woman at the front desk. That conversation changed my life. I was a gay, 24-year-old Hispanic married woman, mother of 3, in a low-income family, just trying to get by. I was having a hard time finding myself and my purpose in the world, but I have never felt more comfortable and more accepted than I have since participating in the Energy and Water Conservation program. This program helps low-income families save money on their water and energy bills by installing more efficient materials and appliances. We also show clients—whose family situations look a lot like my own—how changing their habits can help save energy and water. Though my service term is ending, I will bring the experience and wisdom from the service I have done for my community to future positions and keep it close to my heart. I believe every person should have an opportunity to do something like this."

- Mayra

Public service

We have learned the nation must continue not only to attract Americans of all ages with critical skills to public service but also improve mechanisms to bring them in at all levels of government and in multiple ways. To address these issues, a number of ideas have been suggested to us, including:

- Explore models in higher education that seek to raise the profile and attractiveness of public service and prepare outstanding high school graduates for careers in public service
- Give agencies better tools to recruit and hire interns or fellows and transition them to permanent positions
- Establish a Public Service Corps program, like Reserve Officers' Training Corps, that would offer scholarships and specialized coursework to students at colleges throughout the nation in exchange for a commitment to work in civil service
- Retain programs to forgive student loans for Americans who work in public service careers for at least a decade
- Offer a new, optional federal benefits package to allow for greater flexibility in career progression
- Use modern tools, such as relevant online writing and quantitative tests, to assess candidates
- Test new approaches to hiring, classifying, and compensating science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) personnel throughout the government
- Establish a civilian reserve program for former

federal cybersecurity employees, who could be called up to help agencies in an urgent situation

- Establish a single, streamlined personnel system for health care professionals throughout the government

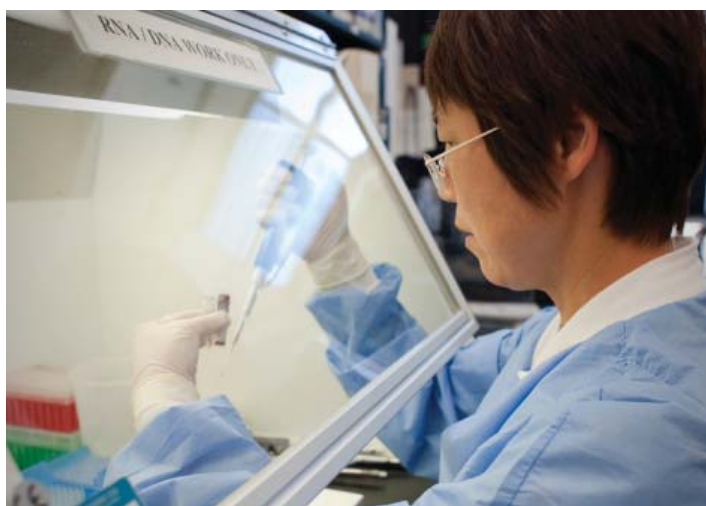
"I strongly believe that holding career fairs or hiring drives across the country on a regular basis would give people like myself, who are passionate about public service, the opportunity to articulate that rather than being relegated to lottery-like odds with USAJOBS."

- Public Comment

Reinvigorating civic education

Civic education is an essential element of our republic. We are exploring how it can be strengthened across the country. A number of ideas have been suggested to us, including:

- Adopt national standards or a national civic education requirement
- Encourage or require schools to include an experiential component, such as a community service requirement, for high school graduation
- Improve youth cadet programs to inspire more young Americans to pursue an active lifestyle, increase awareness of military, national, and public service opportunities, and develop practical skills and civic knowledge
- Seek out the resources and talents of the private sector to assist schools in delivering civic education
- Report civics metrics as a separate subject on the nation's report card
- Prioritize and fund professional development for civics teachers
- Encourage states and local school boards to implement best practices in effective civic education, covering elementary, middle, and high school
- Offer existing citizenship and civic knowledge resources from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and other government agencies to any educators or schools for free



Source: National Institutes of Health



Source: GBlakeley via Getty Images

Looking Forward

During our travels, we met many Americans who are achieving extraordinary results for their communities and our nation through military, national, and public service. The impact of service is powerful, and the desire of Americans to serve is strong; yet too often, barriers prevent Americans from serving. This Commission's mandate presents an opportunity for all Americans to give thought to the ways that we, working together, can harness the time, energy, and talents of all Americans to solve the nation's problems, strengthen our communities, and support our democratic ideals.

We are studying the ideas presented to us as we continue to review the Selective Service System and consider ways to increase participation in military, national, and public service. Additionally, the Commission will host public hearings and additional engagements throughout the United States where we will discuss these topics further. We hope you will add your voice to the conversation.

"Any definition of a successful life must include service to others."

- President George H.W. Bush

2019 Public Hearings

Date	Topic	Location
February 21	Universal Service	Washington, D.C.
March 28	National Service	College Station, TX
April 24-25	Selective Service	Washington, D.C.
May 15-16	Public Service & Military Service	Washington, D.C.
June 20	Creating an Expectation of Service	Hyde Park, NY

Between now and March 2020, when our final report is due to the Congress and the President, we will continue to engage the public and conduct additional research in an effort to obtain as much information as possible.

As we examine challenges and assess solutions to the many issues facing our nation and consider the extent and depth of our civic responsibilities, we know one thing for certain—Americans deserve a clear and supported path to service. We seek to offer a series of recommendations that build that path for all Americans for generations to come.

The national conversation on these important issues begins with you. Contact us via our website or social media.



Strengthening American Democracy Through Service

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*National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service
2530 Crystal Drive
Suite 1000, Box 63
Arlington, VA 22202*

*info@inspire2serve.gov
(703) 571-3742*



Source: beklaus via Getty Images

Acknowledgments and Appendix

A special thank you

The Commission thanks every American who is serving and who has served the nation in any capacity. Thank you to you and your families for the sacrifices you make for our communities and our country. We appreciate the many individuals and organizations that helped make the Commission's mission a success during its launch and first year. We appreciate your time, commitment, and dedication in contributing to the work of the Commission. We will continue to draw on you for your expertise and leadership as the Commission pursues its efforts to inspire every American to serve and develops policy recommendations on the military selective service process and increasing participation in military, national, and public service.

Thank you to the following organizations for meeting with the Commission during our 2018 travels.

Military-affiliated organizations

Air Force Association
Air Force Sergeants Association
American Legion

American Military Partner Association
Association of the United States Army
Association of the United States Navy
Blue Star Families
Center for Military Readiness
Enlisted Association of the National Guard
Fleet Reserve Association
Hero Missions
Home Base Iowa
Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program
Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
Leave No Veteran Behind
Marine Corps League
Military Child Education Coalition
Military Officers Association of America
Military Order of the Purple Heart
National Guard Association of the United States
National Military Family Association
OutServe-SLDN
Service Women's Action Network
Student Veterans of America
Team RWB
Team Rubicon
The Mission Continues
Veterans of Foreign Wars

Veterans Village of San Diego
Wounded Warrior Project

Not-for-profits

After-School All-Stars
ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Federation of Government Employees
American Red Cross
Antelope Valley Partners for Health
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Big Citizen HUB
Big Shoulders Fund
Boy Scouts of America
Boys & Girls Club of America
Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools
Campus Compact
Cedar Rapids AMP
Cedar Rapids Metro Economic Alliance
Central Pennsylvania Food Bank
Church Health
Citizen Advocacy Center
Citizen Schools
City Year
Clifton Chamber of Commerce, Texas
Colorado Youth Corps Association
Commonwealth Corps
Congregational Health Network
Conservation Corps
Conservation Legacy
Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago
Cranfills Gap Volunteer Fire Department, Texas
Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate
Encore.org
FoodCorps Massachusetts
Foster Grandparents
Friends of the Forest Preserves
Greater Englewood Community Development Corporation
Greater Memphis Chamber of Commerce, Tennessee

Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce, Texas
Greencorps Chicago
Give2Get
Habitat for Humanity
Harbor Homes, Inc.
Helping Services for Youth & Families
Homeboy Industries
iCivics
Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce, Florida
Jacksonville Citizen Planning Advisory Committee
Jumpstart
Keystone Hall
Kids That Do Good
Kiwanis Club of Coralville, Iowa
Koreatown Youth and Community Center
Le Bonheur Children's Hospital
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Mass Mentoring Partnership
Massachusetts Competitive Partnership
Massachusetts Promise Fellowship
Massachusetts Service Alliance
Mikva Challenge
Mile High Youth Corps
Mission Waco, Mission World
National Academy of Public Administration
National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)
New Politics
Old Sol Alliance, Inc.
Partnership for Public Service
Partnership for Successful Living
Pilot Club of Iowa City
Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative
Public Allies
Revive Recovery Center
Rocky Mountain Youth Corps
Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
RV Disaster Corps
Seattle CityClub
Seattle Works
Senior Executives Association

Acknowledgments and Appendix

Service Year Alliance
Social Capital Inc.
Sociedad Latina
Teamwork Englewood
Tenacity
Texas Hunger Initiative
The BASE
The Chicago Council on Global Affairs
The Corps Network
The Home for Little Wanderers
The Salvation Army
The Sunrise Optimist Club of Iowa City
United Way Worldwide
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Vital Village Network
Voices for National Service
Volcker Alliance
Welcoming Light
Woodcraft Rangers
Year Up
YMCA
Young Government Leaders
Youth Guidance
YouthBuild USA

Foundations

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Boston Bruins Foundation
Circle of Service Foundation
Cleveland Avenue Foundation for Education
Community Foundation of Memphis
EduCare Foundation
John F. Kennedy Library Foundation
OneStar Foundation
Robert R. McCormick Foundation
Square One Foundation
The Osa Foundation
UPS Foundation

Businesses

AECOM
American Medical Response, Nashua, New
Hampshire

Electric Supply Center
Emmaus Inc.
FedEx
FXTaylor Associates
Golden
Heard Capital LLC
IBM
JPMorgan Chase & Co
LinkedIn
Microsoft
NBCUniversal
Putnam Investments
PwC
Redgate
ServiceMaster
Starbucks
Suffolk Construction, Boston, Massachusetts
The Boston Globe
The HYM Investment Group, LLC
Urban Partnership Bank

Academic institutions and organizations

American Academy of Arts and Sciences
Boston University
California State University, Los Angeles
Chicago Public Schools
College for Social Innovation
Community High School, Chicago, Illinois
Denver Public Schools
East Los Angeles College
Harrisburg Area Community College
John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard
University
Joseph Stilwell Military Academy of Leadership,
Jacksonville, Florida
North High School, Denver, Colorado
School of Advanced International Studies, Johns
Hopkins University
Southwest Tennessee Community College
Suffolk University
Tennessee College of Applied Technology,
Memphis
The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change,

University of Memphis
Thompson Island Outward Bound Education
Center
Tufts University
United Tribes Technical College, Bismarck, North
Dakota
University of Memphis

Government entities

AmeriCorps
AmeriCorps VISTA
Atlantic Beach Police Department, Florida
California Volunteers
City of Boston, Massachusetts
City of Cranfills Gap, Texas
City of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
City of Jacksonville, Florida
City of Memphis, Tennessee
City of Nashua, New Hampshire
City of Vinton, Iowa
Colorado Commission of Indian Affairs
Colorado Department of Military and Veterans
Affairs
Colorado National Guard
Colorado Outdoor Recreation Industry Office
Commission on the National Defense Strategy for
the United States
Corporation for National and Community Service
Delaware State Parks Veterans Conservation Corps
Denver Federal Center
Embassy of Colombia
Embassy of Estonia
Embassy of Nigeria
Embassy of Norway
Federal Executive Boards
Florida National Guard
Garfield County, Colorado
Iowa Army National Guard
Iowa Department of Inspections & Appeals, Food
and Consumer Safety Bureau
Jacksonville Beach Police Department, Florida
Johnson County (Iowa) Board of Supervisors Office
National Civilian Community Corps (NCCCC)

Naval Station Mayport, Florida
Neptune Beach Police Department, Florida
North Dakota Department of Commerce
Peace Corps
Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry
Pennsylvania National Guard
Selective Service System
Serve Colorado—Governor's Commission on
Community Service
Serve Washington
Serve Illinois Commission on Volunteerism and
Community Service
Shelby County Government, Tennessee
Southern Trinity Groundwater Conservation
District, Texas
Standing Rock Tribal Veterans Service Office
State of Colorado
State of Illinois
Tennessee Air National Guard
Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
Texas Department of Transportation
U.S. Agency for International Development
U.S. Air Force Academy
U.S. Army Cadet Command
U.S. Army III Corps, Ft. Hood, Texas
U.S. Army Marketing and Research Group
U.S. Army Recruiting Command
U.S. Army Reserve Counter Terrorism Unit
U.S. Army ROTC
U.S. Army Soldier for Life
U.S. Army War College
U.S. Coast Guard
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service
Agency
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
U.S. Department of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Health
Agency
U.S. Department of Education
U.S. Department of Energy
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal
Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Department of Labor
U.S. Department of State
U.S. Department of the Air Force
U.S. Department of the Army
U.S. Department of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Navy
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
U.S. Digital Service
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. Government Accountability Office
U.S. House Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House Committee on Education and the
Workforce
U.S. House Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform
U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff
U.S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego,
California
U.S. Military Entrance Processing Station, Boston,
Massachusetts
U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration
U.S. National Security Council
U.S. Office of Management and Budget
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
U.S. Public Health Service
U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services
U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education,
Labor, and Pensions
U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and
Government Affairs
U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. Small Business Administration
U.S. Social Security Administration
Volunteer Iowa
Volunteer Tennessee

Faith-based organizations

Antioch Community Church, Waco, Texas
Catholic Women's Forum
Crestview Church of Christ, Waco, Texas
First Baptist Church West, West, Texas
First Spanish Assembly of God, Waco, Texas
Homestead Heritage, Waco, Texas
Islamic Center of Waco, Texas
Lakewood Christian Church, Waco, Texas
Living Hope Outreach—Hope House, Hamilton,
Texas
McLean Bible Church, McLean, Virginia
Temple Adas Shalom, The Hartford Jewish Center,
Havre de Grace, Maryland
Temple Rodef Sholom, Waco, Texas
Texas Baptist Men
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

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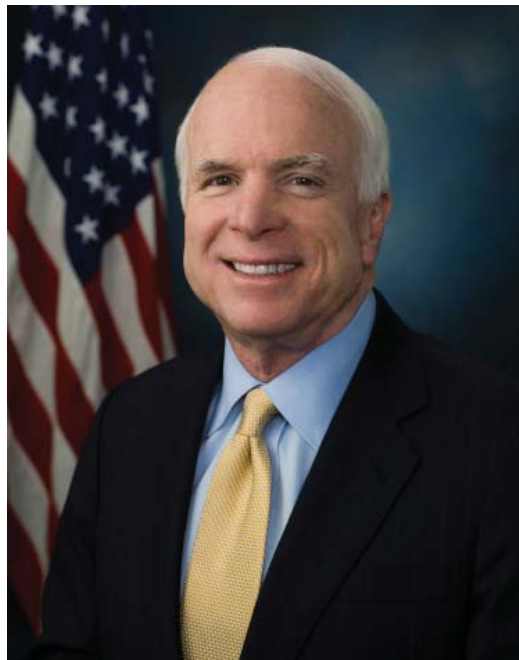
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A tribute to Senator John McCain

The Commission expresses its deepest respect for Senator John McCain, who embodied service throughout his life and, significantly, voiced and advocated for the importance of service in the United States. We are eternally grateful to Senator McCain for championing the establishment of the Commission. He is a source of constant inspiration for all who serve and aspire to serve, and it is an honor to be part of his legacy.



"Every day, people serve their neighbors and our nation in many different ways, from helping a child learn and easing the loneliness of those without a family to defending our freedom overseas. It is in this spirit of dedication to others and to our country that I believe service should be broadly and deeply encouraged."

- Senator John McCain (R-AZ)

